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ABSTRACT

Eighty-one summer school faculty (84 percent return) completed a questionnaire concerning a variety of issues about summer school. Salary and the adequacy of free time were seen as the main reasons for deciding to teach or not to teach summer school. Most faculty activity during the summer consisted of teaching (42 percent), research (25 percent), and writing (17 percent). Faculty did not want either shorter or longer summer sessions, were against visiting faculty, and generally did not see summer school students as different from those attending during the academic year. Faculty were not in favor of a special workshop for themselves, and held relatively positive views of the summer school administration. The best things about summer school were seen as smaller classes, better faculty/student interaction, and a schedule that allowed for time off during the summer. The worst things were seen as low pay, lack of time to cover material, conditioning teaching contracts, and classes meeting every day. No differences were found by sex, rank, or amount of summer teaching experience; however, there were differences of opinion found when faculty were grouped according to 10-month salary level. (Author/LB)

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PERCEPTIONS OF SUMMER SCHOOL FACULTY AT A LARGE UNIVERSITY

Terence J. Tracey, William E. Sedlacek
and Aldrich M. Patterson, Jr.

Research Report # 7-80

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SUMMARY

Eighty-one summer school faculty (84% return) completed a questionnaire concerning a variety of issues about summer school. Salary and the adequacy of free time were seen as the main reasons for deciding to teach or not to teach summer school. Most faculty activity during the summer consisted of teaching (42%), research (25%), and writing (17%). Faculty did not want either shorter or longer summer sessions, were against visiting faculty, and generally did not see summer school students as different from those during the academic year. Faculty were not in favor of a special workshop for themselves, and held relatively positive views of the summer school administration.

The best things about summer school were seen as smaller classes, better faculty/student interaction, and a schedule which allowed for time off during the summer. The worst things about summer school were seen as low pay, lack of time to cover material, conditional teaching contracts, and classes meeting every day. Differences based on demographic characteristics of faculty were also analyzed and discussed.

Very little attention has been paid to the summer sessions at universities and colleges. In educational circles, the summer has traditionally been a period of relaxation and/or catching up. Yet the enrollment in summer schools does not reflect this degree of slowing down. At the University of Maryland, College Park, (UMCP) typically 16,000 students enroll each summer in a much curtailed curriculum. During the academic year, there are only 2 1/2 times as many students on campus, enrolled in a curriculum that is much larger than this 250% increase would indicate. So the lack of attention directed at summer programs, specifically the one at the University of Maryland, seems incongruent with the size of the program.

The paucity of literature regarding summer school also reflects this inattention. From the little research done in this area, it appears that summer school students are different from those enrolled during the academic year. True, academic year degree students enroll in summer courses, but according to the research, they are often the minority (Hawaii University, 1978; Kanun, 1970). Many summer programs have more students who are summer degree only or special students. Schools (universities, colleges and community colleges) are beginning to realize that these new or non-traditional audiences are important, and changes should be made to accommodate them. Some recommendations posited have been to redesign the summer curriculum (Sesow, 1974) and to revamp course lengths, creating shorter, more intensive courses (Williams, 1974). Yet it appears that these recommendations, as well as many others, are rationally based and have little foundation in data. The needs of the summer student population (both regular and/or special) really are not known (Zillman, 1969). Thus many well meaning attempts at redesigning and revamping may have little value and are, in essence, blindly done. One study found that the faculty felt that the length of a course was important in attracting students and meeting their needs, but in fact, no differences among course lengths were found (Cuyahoga Community College, 1973).

Although the needs, demands and reactions of university and college faculty have been well studied with reference to the regular academic year (Beazeley, 1975; Doi, 1974; Eckert & Stucklein, 1961; Gustad, 1960; Ladd & Lipset, 1973; Livesey, 1975; US Office of Education, 1955), little is known of the characteristics of summer faculty and their needs. Also, nothing is known of how the summer faculty perceive the summer students compared to the academic year students. The summer environment appears very different from that of the regular year, and it may be that steps should be taken to better accommodate programs and services to this environment

The purpose of this study was to determine the needs, interests, attitudes and perception of summer school faculty.

Sample One hundred faculty members were randomly selected from the faculty listing prior to the beginning of the first summer session. Each was sent a cover letter soliciting cooperation and a questionnaire. Eighty-one faculty members returned the questionnaire and three were not teaching, resulting in an 84% return rate. The group of respondents was composed of 62% who taught the first summer session only, 29% who taught the second summer session only, and 8% who taught both sessions.

DISCUSSION

The sample was 83% male, 17% female; 92% white, 5% Asian and 3% Black; 24% were instructors or lecturers, 28% were assistant professors, 26% were associate professors, and 22% were professors. There were no significant differences between the above percentages and those of academic year faculty (Chi Square .05).

Reasons for Teaching Summer School

Faculty were most concerned with more remuneration for their efforts for the summer (Table 1). The strong endorsement for the importance of adequate salary (item 10) and a need for money overall (item 16) showed this. The adequacy of free time (item 11) was also endorsed as being important. Two items which appeared important in the decision were item 17 (length of session) and item 18 (time required each day).

There were a few items which yielded means that showed that they were unimportant to the decision of whether or not to teach in summer school. Specifically, whether or not the faculty member was awarded a grant (item 20) or was required to teach by the department (item 19) were unimportant in the decision-making. Also the means showed that the faculty tended to view the opportunities of teaching new or different courses (items 13,14,15) as unimportant in making the decision. Finally the opportunity to take a vacation (item 22) was also viewed by the faculty as being relatively unimportant in deciding whether or not to teach summer school.

Faculty Summer Activities / Faculty Attitudes

Most of the faculty time was devoted to teaching at UMCP (47%), followed by doing research (25%) and writing (17%) (Table 2). The next largest amount of time was devoted to "other" activities (16%), of which the following were the most frequently cited: administration, future course preparation, and outside consultation. Relatively little time was spent either relaxing (10%) or vacationing (13%) during the summer. So the faculty devote almost half of their summer time to teaching summer courses. Faculty did not favor shorter courses than a 4 1/2 week schedule, while they were neutral about endorsing courses longer than the present 5 1/2 weeks (Table 3). The faculty also was not in favor of having visiting faculty during the summer (item 33), although they would consider teaching at another campus (item 34) and/or another campus of the UM system (item 35). Summer school classes as a whole were not viewed as being very different from those during the regular year, as evidenced by the neutral responses to the items stating that summer school students are very different from regular year students (item 30), and that summer school is more relaxed than school during the regular year (item 36). At the same time, the faculty agreed with the statement that the goals of summer school are the same as those during the regular year (item 39). The faculty did not want to be able to teach more courses in the summer (item 37), while they would consider teaching a new

course if they were paid more (item 38). There was a lack of endorsement of the items soliciting interest in faculty workshops of either general interest (item 41) or of problems of motivation and communication in teaching (item 40). Also, responses to questions concerning the summer school administration tended to be positive. The communication with the administration (item 43) and the overall administration (item 42) were viewed as being reasonably efficient and adequate.

Finally, the faculty were asked to state the best and the worst thing abount summer school, and then offer any suggestions for improvement. The most common responses for the best part of summer school were that it provided supplemental income, that there were smaller classes, thus allowing better faculty/student interaction, and that the 5 1/2 week schedule allowed the faculty to have half the summer off. The most common negative responses were that the remuneration was not enough, that there was insufficient time to cover all the material and/or have it sink in, that conditional teaching contracts were undesirable, and that courses meeting everyday were taxing. The most common suggestions aimed at amelioration that were given were offering more courses and paying the faculty more.

All in all, the faculty strongly expressed the need for an increase in pay. The only set of items that consistently received strong reactions were those items concerning money and/or availability of positions. This result might be expected, given this period of spiraling inflation. Other than the pecuniary aspects of the questionnaire, the only other items that received strong endorsement were those items dealing with the length of the summer session. Although the reaction to sessions longer than the present 5 1/2 weeks was mixed, all were strongly against shorter ones. And in keeping with the diverse nature of a large university community, the responses of the faculty regarding their uses of summer time varied greatly. Some used their time teaching, others, doing research, others preparing for future courses, etc. Across the board needs were rare. Opportunities to teach new or different courses were not endorsed strongly, but several faculty members

felt this was the best thing about summer school. Some loved the summer school's relaxed pace, while others loved the intense pace. In this diversity, there exists the opportunity to start small experimental summer programs of unique courses of varying lengths and intensities with the help of specific faculty. But for this to be effective, it would have to be as an adjunct to the present format, for this format seemed to satisfy the most faculty members.

Examination of Faculty Differences

The differences in the opinions of the summer faculty will be examined in this section. The opinion responses of the faculty were examined to see if there were any differences associated with the sex, rank, salary, or summer teaching experience of the faculty, using analyses of variance and Scheffe post hoc tests at the .05 level.

No differences were found by sex, rank or amount of summer teaching experience. Differences of opinion were found when the faculty was grouped according to ten-month salary level (low = less than $16,000; middle = $16,000 to $22,000; high = above $22,000). The lower paid faculty attached less importance to adequate pay for a course or general financial need in terms of deciding whether or not to teach summer school. And although all faculty felt that the obtaining of a grant was of little importance in deciding to teach for the summer, the moderately paid faculty members felt that this was even less important than did the higher paid faculty. The lower paid faculty members were more in favor of the summer school hiring more visiting faculty members than were the faculty members with the higher salaries. The highest paid faculty members were less inclined to teach more courses for the summer than were either the moderate or the lowest paid group. Also, this high paid group was less in favor of attending any workshops on correcting teaching problems or general faculty interest than the lower paid group. All in all, it appeared that the higher paid faculty were

endorsing specific changes less than their lower paid colleagues.

The final analysis of the faculty data centered on the question of "To what degree is the amount of time spent at UMCP related to the opinions of the faculty?" This was examined using a stepwise multiple regression, with the years worked at UMCP as the criterion, and the attitude items (10-22 and 30-43) as the predictors. This procedure selected those items that had the highest correlations with the variable of years at UMCP. Only two items (33 and 39) had significant (.05) correlations with the criterion. Those faculty members with more experience here agreed more (i.e., had lower scores) than those with less experience that the goals of summer school were the same as during the regular year. Also, those more experienced faculty members disagreed more (received a higher score) than newer faculty members that more visiting summer faculty should be hired. So more time spent here is associated with viewing the summer school as similar to the regular year with respect to goals, and also being less desirous of hiring visiting summer faculty.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of the Importance of items in the Decision of Whether or Not to Teach Summer School

Item		Mean	SD
10.	Adequate salary for time	1.84	1.02
11.	Adequate free time	2.27	1.09
12.	Minimum course preparation required	3.05	1.18
13.	Opportunity to teach a course that I had not taught previously	3.57	1.45
14.	Opportunity to teach a course that is not part of the regular curriculum	3.99	1.47
15.	Opportunity to try out a new course	3.69	1.48
16.	Need the money overall	1.66	.89
17.	Length of session	2.55	1.01
18.	Time required each day	2.80	1.05
19.	Required by my department	4.10	1.29
20.	Was awarded a grant this summer	4.77	.77
21.	Opportunity to do research	3.33	1.63
22.	Opportunity to take a vacation	3.65	1.42

1= very important, 2= important, 3= neutral, 4= unimportant, 5= not relevant.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of the Percentage of Time Spent at Various Activities During the Summer

Activity	Mean	SD
Teaching at UMCP	41.89	20.83
Teaching elsewhere	1.56	8.00
Doing Research	25.45	18.88
Writing	16.53	13.71
Relaxing	10.45	11.83
Vacationing	12.65	12.83
Other	16.31	19.11

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of Attitude Items

Item	Mean	SD
31. Students who enroll in summer school are very different from those who enroll during the regular year	3.07	1.15
32. I would rather teach courses shorter than four and one half weeks	4.10	1.03
33. The summer school should hire more visiting faculty	3.49	1.00
34. I would consider teaching at another school during the summer	2.54	1.09
35. I would consider teaching at another UM campus during the summer	2.82	1.21
36. Summer school is more relaxed than the regular academic year	3.05	1.26
37. I would like to be able to teach more courses during the summer	3.24	1.22
38. If I were paid more, I would consider teaching a new course during the summer	2.17	1.06
39. The goals of summer school are the same as those of the regular academic year	2.52	1.14
40. I would be interested in attending some workshops on problems of motivation and communication in teaching	3.17	1.05
41. I would be interested in attending some general interest faculty workshops	3.21	.99
42. The summer school administration is not efficient	3.36	.87
43. Communication with the summer school administration is open and adequate	2.86	.90

1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= neutral, 4=disagree, 5= strongly disagree